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ABSTRACT

The Utah State University Elementary Teacher Education Program, SODIA, is multicultural, performance-based, field-centered, and utilizes portal schools as partners in the teacher education program. It is an interdisciplinary and interdepartmental program utilizing staff from the Departments of Psychology, Special Education, and Family and Child Development, who work in conjunction with the Department of Elementary Education. These university faculty members work in an integrated program with teachers and principals of 12 portal schools and the Utah State University Edith Bowen Elementary Teacher Education Laboratory School. The acronym SODIA represents the first letter of each of the key words, "self," "others," "disciplines," "implementation," and "associate," which describe the major focus of each of the five levels of the program. Each level involves experiences on-site in the public schools. The following three major dimensions of competencies have been identified for professional teachers: (1) personal relations, (2) teaching skills, and (3) subject knowledge. These dimensions form the base for instruction at each level, and evaluation of SODIA is based on each student's performance toward reaching a level of competence in these dimensions. The portfolio method is used in which the student assumes primary responsibility for presenting evidence of his/her competency. (Author/BD)

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Official Entry

The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

1976 DISTINGUISHED ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS PROGRAM

ELEMENTARY TEACHER EDUCATION

AT

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

SODIA

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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SUMMARY

The Utah State University Elementary Teacher Education Program, SODIA, is multi-cultural, performance-based, field-centered, and utilizes portal schools as partners in the teacher education program. It is an interdisciplinary and inter-departmental program utilizing staff from the Departments of Psychology, Special Education, and Family and Child Development who work in conjunction with the Department of Elementary Education. These University faculty members work with teachers and principals of 12 portal schools and the Utah State University Edith Bowen Elementary Teacher Education Laboratory School in an integrated program.

The acronym SODIA represents the first letter of each of the key words, self, others, disciplines, implementation, and associate, which describe the major focus of each of the five levels of the program. Students progress through the five levels in the four-year program. Each level involves experiences on-site in the public schools.

Three major dimensions of competencies have been identified for professional teachers--a)personal relations, b) teaching skills, and c) subject knowledge--and form the base for instruction at each level. Although each of the various levels in the SODIA program focuses on specific competencies, the personal and professional growth of a student in the program is a continuous whole.

Evaluation of SODIA is based on each student's performance toward reaching a level of competence in the "personal," skills," and "subjects" domains. The portfolio method is used in which the student assumes primary responsibility for presenting evidence of his or her competence.

Description of the Sodia Program

The SODIA program is multi-cultural, performance-based, field-centered, and utilizes portal schools as partners in the teacher education program. It is an interdisciplinary and interdepartmental program utilizing staff from the Departments of Psychology, Special Education, and Family and Child Development who work in conjunction with the Department of Elementary Education. A student may major in Early Childhood Education (grades Pre-K through 3) and/or Elementary Education (grades 1 through 6). Both programs follow the same general SODIA format.

The acronym SODIA stands for five levels of development through which a student progresses in the four year program:

Level I--Self: This is a three-credit course taken during the student's freshman year. The major purpose of this course is to help a student better understand self in relation to children, teachers, and the teaching profession. At least 10 hours are spent in public school classrooms as a teacher aide. Some preliminary instruction is given in developing 12 personality traits considered to be desirable for teachers. The student evaluates himself or herself with an instrument designed to chart his or her personality.[1] The student and faculty members analyze the student's potential as a teacher, and the decision is made whether the student should continue in the program.

Level II--Others: This is a full quarter's work for 15 credits taken during the sophomore year. A student is assigned to a public school where he or she spends approximately 200 hours as a teacher aide. The rest of the time is spent in seminars where the student works with faculty members in Elementary Education, Psychology, Special Education, and Child Development to learn more about and to respect "others"--regardless of sex; racial, cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds; or physical handicaps.

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[1]Refer to pages 4-20 & 21 in SODIA Program Description, Philosophy and Student Handbook of Competencies, hereinafter referred to as SODIA Handbook (copy enclosed).

In Level II teaching skills are operationally defined in 14 skill areas. Within each skill area specific subskills are studied at four levels: Informational, Developmental, Action Research, and Transactional (SODIA Handbook, pp. 4-23 to 4-30). Four skills (options from five to nine are possible) in each of the 14 areas are assessed at the conclusion of the program. The portfolio method is used in which the student assumes the primary responsibility for presenting evidence of his or her competence. This is reviewed by the supervisor and cooperating teacher.

Level III--Disciplines: This is a full quarter's work of 18 credits taken during the junior year. The student's work involves another block of approximately 200 hours of practicum experience where he or she teaches children in the Laboratory School.

During Level III the student is actively acquiring information regarding the discipline (i.e. content) areas. In the portfolio record the student makes notes on available materials, plans and resources for continual reference (SODIA Handbook, pp. 4-31 to 4-41). The student begins to learn how to make some decisions on future use of resources and continues to develop teaching skills. In order to insure balanced development, the progressive record shows experience in all elementary school subjects.

Level IV--Implementation: This is a full quarter's work of 15 credits taken during the senior year. The student teacher becomes part of a professional team at two separate grade levels in the elementary schools.

Level IV culminates and integrates all previous experiences. At this level the student's cumulative record of his or her competencies is the primary source for assessment data (SODIA Handbook, pp. 4-46 and 47).

Level V--Associate Teaching: This level is optional for a student after student teaching and provides additional practicum experience as a member of an instructional team in the public schools. A student applying for associate teaching makes an individual contract for 3 to 12 hours of specialized work.

Development of the Sodia Program and Personnel Involved

The present SODIA program was developed over a period of seven years. Faculty

members studied innovative teacher education programs and materials from many other universities throughout the country. During a three-day retreat in 1971 the faculty developed what is now referred to as the SODIA program and in later retreats refined the original concept, adding an additional component in the form of a teaching support minor which includes method courses in music, art, physical education, and media. In 1974 the learning processes model of teaching competencies developed by Dr. David Stone of the Psychology Department at Utah State University and others became an integral part of the SODIA program. An internship program in two central Utah school districts was initiated in 1975. At the request of the Department of Special Education all their majors began participating in the Level II program this fall.

The program has grown since 1971 when only one public school served as a portal school to the present where 12 public schools are involved in the program. Administrative personnel from these public schools are members of a permanent planning committee to insure a cooperative and collaborative relationship.

Program Objectives

The objectives of the SODIA program are to:

1. Provide the public schools with better prepared, more qualified, and effective teachers.
2. Provide students with early exposure to the public schools so they can base their decision to become teachers on first-hand experience.
3. Provide a series of practicum experiences with children at all elementary grade levels which relate directly to college course work.
4. Provide a cooperative education program for college students utilizing the personnel and resources of public schools and the University.
5. Evaluate students on the basis of performance as well as knowledge.
6. Include courses from different departments on campus and provide students the opportunity to work with teachers in various departments.
7. Provide an optional post-student teaching experience for undergraduate students.

8. Provide improved instruction for children in the portal schools.
9. Improve the quality of supervision of the cooperating teachers in the portal schools through in-service programs.

Budget

For the most part the Elementary Education Department utilized the regular departmental budget to develop and implement the SODIA program. Approximately $6,000 was spent for two staff work retreats and some special instructional materials in the initial development. Three additional staff retreats have been held at a cost of approximately $3,000 to further refine the program and to implement the learning process model of teaching competencies developed by Dr. David Stone and others. Approximately $2,000 was spent to print three publications developed by the department which are an essential part of the SODIA program. These are: (1) Student Program Planning Guidebook, (2) SODIA Program Description, Philosophy, and Student Handbook of Competencies, and (3) Handbook for Elementary Student Teaching.

Program Contributions to the Improvement of Education

The SODIA program contributes to the improvement of education in its identification and implementation of the three major dimensions of competencies for professional teachers--(1) personal relations, (2) teaching skills, and (3) subject knowledge.

Although each of the various levels in the SODIA program centers on specific competencies, the personal and professional growth of a student in the program is a continuous whole.

The program also demonstrates the following:

1. A comprehensive program can be initiated without funding from outside sources.
2. Students can receive the equivalent of one full year of supervised classroom experiences in a regular four-year undergraduate program.
3. A variety of departments working together can provide a more effective teacher education program.
4. A comprehensive teacher education program can be provided in partnership with

the public schools.

5. An effective means of combining theory with practicum can be provided.
6. College faculty can work cooperatively and successfully in the public school setting.

In addition, employers indicate that Level IV student teachers in the SODIA program are equivalent to first- or second-year experienced teachers in their ability to function and teach effectively. (See letters enclosed.)

Another contribution is that the students themselves are extremely enthusiastic about their participation with children at all levels of the program. They feel that they are well prepared to teach upon completion of SODIA.

Evaluation

At the end of each quarter the Department Head meets with students at each of the SODIA levels and receives feedback regarding the program. Similar meetings are held with teachers in the portal schools to assess what might be improved or modified.

The new SODIA program has had considerable positive informal evaluation and feedback from cooperating public school personnel, university staff, students in the program, and outside sources. Partly on the basis of the information from these sources, it has been concluded that the program has many components which provide a better quality elementary teacher education program than any that has been available at Utah State University.

Formal evaluation of SODIA is based on each student's performance toward reaching a level of competence in the "personal," "skills," and "subjects" domains. The portfolio method is used in which the student assumes primary responsibility for presenting evidence of his or her competence. This is reviewed by the university supervisor and cooperating teacher and the student is given a rating which varies from "poor" to "outstanding" for each of the 34 competency areas (SODIA Handbook, pp. 4-42 to 4-47).